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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 000446

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: CONTE CRONY AND FORMER KEY OFFICIAL THROWN IN JAIL

REF: A. CONAKRY 0424
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0420

Classified By: A/DCM SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

[1](#)1. (SBU) Multiple Embassy sources have confirmed an August 19 internet news report (Guinee24.com) that the former Secretary General of the Presidency, Sam Soumah, has been arrested and is being detained at the military prison PM3. A contact at the Bureau of Customs told Pol LES over the telephone that he had stopped by PM3 earlier this morning and personally seen Soumah sitting alone in a small room watching television. He mentioned that Soumah was not actually in a prison cell, but rather in a room with a door that Soumah could open at will. Contact, who claims to have known Soumah for a number of years, said that he shook Soumah's hand and that Soumah appeared "very low."

[1](#)2. (SBU) The internet news article reports that Soumah was arrested for embezzlement of public funds, and specifically, 500 million francs CFA (more than \$1.1 million) that Senegal gave to the Government of Guinea to support the country's upcoming celebration of fifty years of independence. A gendarme contact confirmed the charges and said that Soumah "confessed to the crime and was ordered to pay back the entire amount" in order to be released from prison. A police source told Pol LES that Soumah had been arrested on drug charges.

COMMENT

[1](#)3. (C) Soumah has long been seen as one of the "untouchables" of Conte's regime. Earlier in the year, the French Ambassador told then DCM that the president would never dismiss Soumah. However, Soumah's recent sacking and apparent arrest, if it sticks, indicates that the only constant in Guinea's government continues to be the president himself. Soumah's fall from grace also suggests that another camp of influence may be emerging (see also septel on new presidential decree). It is unclear as to what the actual charges are, but the case is likely to be high profile in the weeks ahead. END COMMENT.
BROKENSHIRE